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program in  
urban renewal

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THE BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY



#### FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

It gives me great pride and pleasure to introduce this plan for your new Washington Park Neighborhood.

It is a plan that is the product of two years of give-and-take between the residents of the area and the staff members of the BRA. In this planning process — planning with people in the fullest sense of the word — the emphasis has been on conservation rather than demolition.

The key to this plan is that the overwhelming majority of existing buildings in the area will be saved through repair and rehabilitation over a four to five year period.

Such private rehabilitation in your neighborhood will be aided by long-term FHA-guaranteed home improvement loans available to homeowners in an urban renewal area.

New housing, schools, parks, playgrounds, libraries and other improvements will also help restore Washington Park as a good, sound neighborhood in a revitalized Boston.

I have faith that you will continue to participate in this exciting opportunity to remake our community.

JOHN F. COLLINS, Mayor



A well-maintained home in the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area



Residents of urban renewal area and BRA staff discuss plan proposals

## Washington Park will be a better neighborhood in a better Boston

The Washington Park Neighborhood is that section of Roxbury which extends from Dudley Square down to Franklin Park. It has been called one of Boston's "middle-aged" neighborhoods because most of its buildings date from before the turn of the century. In fact, except for some apartment buildings, there has been little residential construction here since World War I.

When originally laid out, this particular neighborhood was a very desirable address — and still boasts many pleasant residential streets and many homes which are as good as any in the city. However, some sections have not been so well maintained and these sections pose a serious threat to the community as a whole.

The worst housing and environment is found along Bower Street between Humboldt Avenue and Warren Street. Around the northern boundary of this area near Dudley Square is another rundown section of mixed residential and commercial use that is today blighted and could tomorrow be a slum. There are also badly blighted strips along Warren Street and underneath the El on Washington Street.

Such blighted buildings and groups of buildings in this neighborhood are largely to blame for the growing number of fires which since 1950 have snuffed out the lives of 22 men, women, and children. They are breeding grounds for rats and for many diseases including tuberculosis. It is no exaggeration to state that bad housing — together with such accompanying conditions as over-crowded, obsolete, and inadequate schools, and lack of adequate recreational facilities — is also directly associated with an alarming increase in juvenile delinquency.

In a spontaneous attempt to cope with such problems as poor housing and delinquency, citizens' groups began to organize at the end of World War II. Some of these groups were short-lived. In 1949, however, Freedom House was founded as a civic and cultural center for the entire neighborhood. A few years later, Freedom House set up the first street improvement group in the Washington Park Neighborhood. This was called the Munroe Street Block Association and was the forerunner of 27 such groups which were organized by 1959.

Other citizens' groups were also active. On a district-wide scale the need for an organization that would provide a clearing house on community problems and serve to encourage cooperative action among business, educational, religious, governmental, civic and welfare segments of the entire Roxbury area led in 1954 to the formation of the Roxbury Community Council. In 1955, in turn, the Roxbury Community Council helped organize the Warren Neighborhood Association.

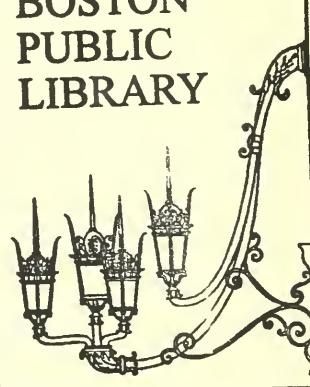
All of these grass-roots groups made self-help efforts to upgrade this neighborhood through programs and projects that included clean-up campaigns, property improvement, how-to-do-it rehabilitation demonstrations, tree planting, petitions for better schools and more playgrounds.

By the end of 1959, however, many residents were beginning to ask themselves how their unaided efforts could possibly be effective without some sort of overall planning, not only for Roxbury, but for the city as a whole.

This was the situation in September of 1960 when Mayor Collins made an historic announcement. Challenging all of the citizens of Boston to work together for the future of their city, the Mayor laid down the framework of a bold, \$90-million city-wide renewal program.

In this program Washington Park will be one of the first neighborhoods to undergo residential rehabilitation.

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Rehabilitation work going forward in Washington Park

## the emphasis will be on restoration and repair



Staff member reviews plans with property owner

In announcing his program for the renewal of Boston, Mayor Collins asked that neighborhoods be planned on a partnership basis by people living in those neighborhoods and Boston Redevelopment Authority personnel. This has been the actual case during the planning for Washington Park. In this neighborhood, the Washington Park Steering Committee first provided an organization uniting block groups, neighborhood associations and influential citizens in an urban renewal planning team. This Committee has formed the core of even broader citizen participation in the new Citizens' Urban Renewal Action Committee (CURAC).

In hundreds of meetings between these groups and staff members of the BRA, there has been an open exchange of ideas and information. These meetings have helped provide a sounding board for planning proposals, and residents have made many suggestions that have been developed into definite features of the plan.

Here are the major features of the plan for the renewal and restoration of the Washington Park Neighborhood.

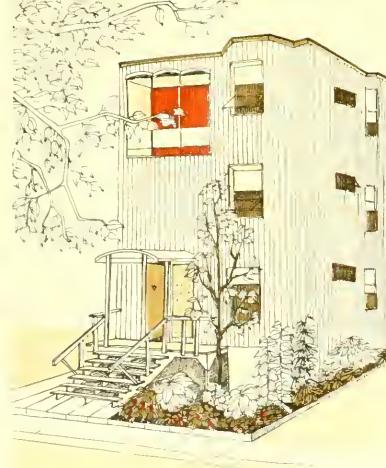
Residential rehabilitation in Washington Park means a program in which the emphasis is on neighborhood conservation and on the repair and rehabilitation of existing buildings. Exhaustive surveys in this neighborhood have shown that the overwhelming majority of buildings can be repaired and restored. Six out of ten of these buildings need no repair or only minor repair to bring them up to City Code standards. The remaining four out of ten, while needing extensive repair, can be rehabilitated.

Most of these buildings are residential. Many are old but they are solidly built and it would be quite costly to build homes like them today.

To bring these hundreds of homes up to standard — to give them a new lease on life and years of additional service — will be the number one aim of renewal in this neighborhood.



Typical dwelling before rehabilitation



Typical dwelling after rehabilitation

### **HOME IMPROVEMENT WILL BE VIGOROUSLY ENCOURAGED**

To encourage the individual homeowner who wants to improve his property, BRA staff members will assist in estimating the cost of needed and useful improvements. Technical guidance in design, construction, and in the financing of improvements will also be available.

### **BANKS STAND READY TO LOAN FUNDS**

It is estimated that about \$5-million will be spent by homeowners in the Washington Park Neighborhood to upgrade their property. In the past, mortgage money to finance such repairs has not been readily available in this neighborhood. However, to facilitate the flow of mortgage money for remodeling and repairs, the savings banks in Boston have pledged to Mayor Collins that an initial \$20-million will be available for rehabilitation purposes in neighborhoods like Washington Park.

### **SPECIAL MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE WILL BE AVAILABLE**

FHA approvals of the renewal plan will also make available special mortgage assistance. Section 220 of the National Housing Act provides mortgage insurance for financing the rehabilitation on liberal terms of existing housing. The property owner will also benefit directly from the neighborhood improvements which will stabilize and enhance property values and protect them over the long run.

### **CLEARANCE WILL BE HELD TO A MINIMUM**

If Washington Park is to be permanently improved, rehabilitation and repair of a major portion of its buildings will not be enough. Substandard buildings will have to be torn down to provide a fresh start for this neighborhood and a new environment for the people who live here. This will also provide sites for new housing, schools, parks, playgrounds and other badly needed public facilities.

### **PROPERTIES WILL BE ACQUIRED AT FAIR MARKET VALUE**

The BRA will pay fair market value for property which must be acquired. This amount is established by two independent appraisals made by two professional appraisers. If the homeowner feels his property is worth more, he has the right of appeal to the courts. Experience has shown that the BRA and the property owner are able to agree on a price in 80% of the cases without going to court.

### **BRA WILL HELP FIND STANDARD HOMES, PAY MOVING ALLOWANCES**

The BRA will help all families and individuals who must be relocated to find decent, safe, and sanitary housing into which they can move. The BRA will also pay moving allowances up to a limit of \$200. Special relocation benefits will be extended to businesses.

### **RELOCATION WILL BE GRADUAL**

Such relocation as is necessary will be carried out gradually to minimize hardship and ensure that relocation housing is available. Such housing will be housing for sale or rent. The Boston Housing Authority has given a firm commitment that displaced families who are eligible and who desire public housing will be given first priority for admission as vacancies become available.

### **WHAT THE PLAN WILL COST**

The new schools, libraries, parks, playgrounds, community centers and other badly-needed improvements in Washington Park will be paid for out of public funds. The overall cost will be about \$28-million. The Federal government will pay about \$16.5-million of this amount. This will provide for rehabilitation services, relocation, site clearance and demolition, and the installation of such facilities as better street lighting and new street paving.

### **MANY FAMILIES WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO BUY HOMES**

Because the Federal government realizes that families displaced by urban renewal may face some hardship, the law provides that eligible displaced families may buy a single family home costing up to \$14,500 with no down payment except a small closing cost of \$200. If the buyer does not have the \$200 at the outset, the seller may arrange for deferred payment on a short-term basis. The mortgage on such properties will be for up to forty years.

A substantial number of those displaced by renewal in this neighborhood will be able to buy homes through this program. An increase in homeownership residents will add new strength to the restored Washington Park Neighborhood.



Proposed new housing on Townsend Street



Proposed new school on Humboldt Avenue

## millions will be spent for improvement

### NEW PRIVATE HOUSING

Approximately 1500 units of new housing in attractive modern design will be built throughout the area and on the Notre Dame Academy grounds. These new homes and apartments for rent or sale will be of the row, garden, and duplex type and will provide off-street parking and ample outdoor play-space for children.

- at least 450 new units on the Notre Dame Academy grounds.
- at least 150 new units in the vicinity of St. Richard's Church, around the intersection of Walnut Avenue and Warren Street.
- 70 new units on Townsend Street between Humboldt Avenue and Harold Street.
- at least 100 new units at Ottawa and Bower Streets, between the new shopping center and Humboldt Avenue.
- 100 units of new housing for the elderly on Columbus Avenue near Egleston Square.
- approximately 150 new units on Codman Park off Washington Street.
- approximately 100 new units between Munroe Street and the new crosstown boulevard along Humboldt Avenue.
- approximately 170 new units along Washington Street near Dale Street.
- approximately 210 additional new units on small sites in the area which will be provided by clearing dilapidated buildings.

### NEW PUBLIC HOUSING

- Some of these units might consist of public housing for low-income families and the elderly. They could be dispersed throughout the neighborhood and would be in garden apartments and row houses. The number in one location would be small.

### NEW SCHOOLS

Of the five public elementary schools in this neighborhood, only two are fire resistant. Moreover, the Howe School is 94 years old, the Williams School is 70 years old, and the Boardman School is 62 years old. To replace these overcrowded and obsolete schools, three new elementary schools will be built and Lewis Junior High School will be converted to an elementary school and modernized.

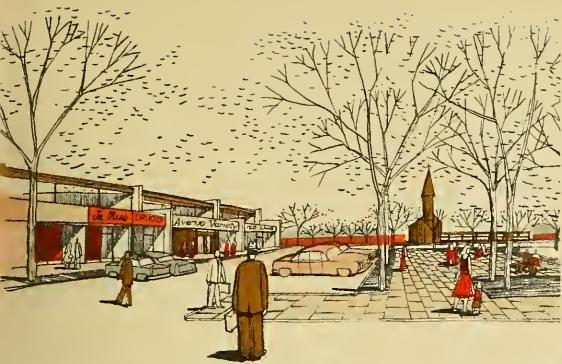
- a new elementary school for 610 pupils on Humboldt Avenue between Harrishof and Waumbeck Streets. This new school will replace the obsolete Boardman School and relieve overcrowding at the Ellis School and Garrison School.
- a new elementary school for 410 pupils between Fountain and Regent Streets. This new school will replace the obsolete Howe School.
- a new elementary school for 820 pupils in the vicinity of Harold and Homestead Streets, to relieve overcrowding at the Garrison School and to replace the Williams School.
- Lewis Junior High School will be converted into an elementary school. To rehouse pupils displaced from Lewis School, Roosevelt School will be converted into a junior high school and enlarged with a new addition. A new junior high school could also be built east of Blue Hill Avenue as part of a subsequent renewal program.

### NEW RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

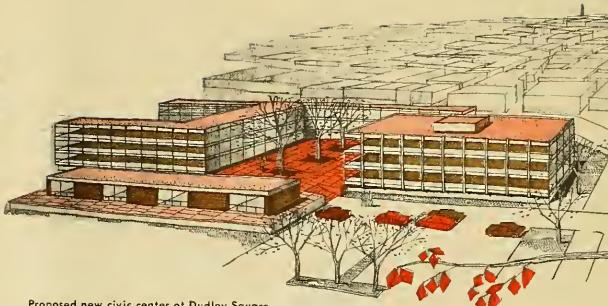
Public recreational facilities to serve children and adults in Washington Park are woefully lacking. Almost 4,000 elementary school age children share only a handful of public swings and seesaws, while three public basketball hoops "make do" for an equally large number of adolescents. To provide the play areas to keep these youngsters off the streets, each of the three new elementary schools will have ample playgrounds. A playground will also be added to the Ellis School, while the playground in Harris Park will be improved.

Here are other improvements planned for the Washington Park Neighborhood:

- a new recreation center between Washington Park and Washington Street for the Washington Park and Highland Park areas. This will include a playfield, a playground, and a community recreational center building. This playground will also serve Lewis Junior High School after its proposed conversion to an elementary school.
- a new YMCA on Warren Street between Munroe Street and the new crosstown boulevard. This major YMCA will contain a gymnasium and rooms for club meetings, games and special activities.
- a new Roxbury Boys' Club located near the new civic center at Dudley Square.



Proposed new neighborhood shopping center on Humboldt Avenue



Proposed new civic center at Dudley Square

#### A NEW CIVIC CENTER AT DUDLEY SQUARE

The local shopping and transportation center in Roxbury has always been Dudley Square. Today this badly congested area has many seedy and rundown buildings. One blighted section, within the boundaries of the project area, will be cleared to open up a five-acre site for a new civic center combining such community functions as a new Roxbury Court House and municipal field offices, a new police station, one of the two new branch libraries to be built in this neighborhood, and the new Roxbury Boys' Club. Buildings will be grouped around a landscaped plaza and will provide ample off-street parking.

#### NEW COMMERCIAL AREAS

Many businesses in the Washington Park Neighborhood today are housed in rundown, dingy, or obsolete facilities. To provide attractive new space for business, and to make shopping more convenient for residents, here is what the plan proposes:

- a new eight acre community shopping center at the intersection of the new cross-town boulevard and Warren Street to contain a food market, a variety of small stores, and possibly a small department store.
- a one acre neighborhood shopping center and professional office building on Humboldt Avenue between Townsend and Harrishof Streets.
- a new neighborhood shopping center on Walnut Avenue at Circuit Street.
- a new neighborhood shopping center at the intersection of Washington Street and the new crosstown boulevard.
- off-street parking facilities for the shopping centers at Humboldt Avenue and Ruthven Street, and at Grove Hall.
- a three acre commercial site near Dudley Square to provide modern plant facilities for important local employers now located here.

#### TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENTS

Congested streets and lack of off-street parking are typical of this area. East-west circulation across the neighborhood is difficult. These conditions can be improved through a program which calls for new medians, street widening, and bus pull-offs on the most congested thoroughfares as well as new signals, better lighting, more off-street parking, and a major new crosstown boulevard.

- Humboldt and Walnut Avenues from Warren Street to Franklin Park will undergo a major facelift. New traffic controls will make these streets much safer. They will also be beautified with landscaping and tree plantings.
- Warren Street from Deckard Street to Dudley Street will be widened and landscaped. Planting strips will act as noise buffers and improve neighborhood appearance, making this section of Warren an asset to the immediate neighborhood, rather than just a "through" street to downtown.
- a new thoroughfare with planted median will connect Warren to Washington Streets partly along the present alignment of Bower Street.



### ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

- Rehabilitation
- New Housing
- New Neighborhood Shopping Center
- New Community Shopping Center
- New School
- New Church
- New Civic Center
- New Community Facility
- New Park and Open Space

**Your New Washington Park**

## what is good

Many pleasant residential streets and homes in good condition convenient to downtown Boston

Excellent public transportation by bus and rapid transit

Washington Park, Horatio Harris Park, and Franklin Park to the south

28 churches, 4 synagogues, and other dedicated community-serving organizations including St. Mark's Social Center and Freedom House Civic Center

Boston Technical High School and the new Egleston Square branch library

The Ada Hinton Apartments for Women, the Jewish Memorial Hospital, and other local institutions that have shown their faith in this neighborhood by recent building programs

More than 6,000 families determined to save their neighborhood

## what is bad

Neglected streets and houses that blight their surroundings and lower property values

Vacant and vandalized houses spotted throughout this neighborhood contributing to high fire insurance rates

One out of four houses in bad repair

Obsolete public elementary schools

Many congested streets

Totally inadequate recreational areas contributing to a high and growing delinquency rate

A plan to remedy these bad conditions has been developed by residents working on a partnership basis with staff members of the Boston Redevelopment Authority. This plan will protect all that is good in the neighborhood, remove all that is harmful, and provide many new improvements that will make the neighborhood better.



Rear of dilapidated tenements in the Washington Park Urban Renewal Area.



Meeting of Citizens' Urban Renewal Action Committee (CURAC).



JOHN F. COLLINS, Mayor

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"The whole heart and soul of the renewal process in Boston today is planning with people. It marks a shift away from the clearance project to the renewal-rehabilitation project aimed at preserving an entire neighborhood.

"The process is simple. It begins with an act of faith. The BRA staff and neighborhood groups make contact with one another. They get acquainted. They work together and develop confidence and respect. This joint effort — this confidence and respect — is the basis of success."\*

\*Page 7, Boston's Workable Program for Community Improvement, 1962

This brochure describes a proposed urban renewal plan developed by the people of Washington Park in cooperation with BRA staff. Before the plan can be carried out it must be approved after public hearing by the BRA, the Boston City Council, the Massachusetts Division of Urban and Industrial Renewal, and the U.S. Housing and Home Finance Agency.

For further information about Urban Renewal in Washington Park call the Urban Renewal Information Center, Freedom House,

14 Crawford Street, HI 5-4720

or

the Boston Redevelopment Authority

73 Tremont Street, RI 2-0500

City Hall Annex, CA 7-4270

Project Office

St. Richard's R. C. Church, HI 2-8712